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Pesticide Safety Information

CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
PESTICIDE REGULATION
1001 I Street,
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Protecting Yourself From Breathing Pesticides on Farms

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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No. 5

Sometimes, pesticide spray can stay in the air that you breathe.

The best way to avoid breathing pesticides is to use a tractor with an enclosed cab that has a special filter that keeps pesticides out.

Another way to protect yourself is to wear a breathing mask called a respirator.



WHEN SHOULD I WEAR A RESPIRATOR?

You **must** wear a respirator anytime the pesticide label requires one. You **may** need to wear a respirator if the pesticide label says, "Avoid breathing vapor or mist."

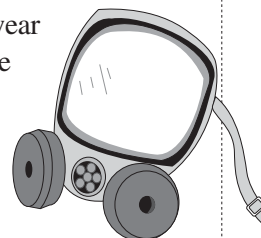
The farmer or your foreman must give you a respirator when it is needed. You must wear it.

WHAT TRAINING DO I NEED?

Before you use a respirator for the first time, you must be trained in how to use it safely. After that, you must get the training again every year. Training must tell you when you need to wear a respirator and show you how to safely wear it. You must also be told about what the respirator can't protect you against.

HOW DO I GET THE RIGHT RESPIRATOR?

There are different kinds of respirators that will protect you from different dangers. When using pesticides that could irritate your eyes, you might wear a full-face respirator (like in the picture) to protect your eyes and lungs. The pesticide label or the farmer will tell you what kind of respirator to use.



It is also very important that the respirator fits your face. Respirators come in different sizes. You must be trained how to check your respirator fit. While you are checking how your respirator fits and getting used to it, wear it in an area where there are no pesticides. The farmer or someone he hires will make sure it fits your face.

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On the outside of the respirator it must say that it is approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

CAN ANYONE USE A RESPIRATOR?

Breathing through a respirator can be very hard for some people. People with problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease or a perforated eardrum may not be able to use respirators. If you are handling a pesticide and are supposed to use a respirator, your foreman must ask you if you have any of these health problems. If you do, you must get a doctor's permission to use a respirator. If you have told your foreman that you might have a health problem, the doctor must examine you. The doctor then must give his report to the farmer. The farmer must follow the doctor's written orders about whether or not you can wear a respirator.

IF I HAVE A MUSTACHE OR A BEARD. CAN I WEAR A RESPIRATOR?

- If you have a beard, mustache, or long sideburns, you need a special kind of respirator. A regular respirator won't protect you because the mustache, beard or sideburns keep it from making a tight seal on your face.
- If your boss doesn't have one of these special respirators, you cannot do the work.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY RESPIRATOR IS WORKING?

Most respirators do not really clean the air. What they do is stop most harmful chemicals from getting into your lungs. They do this with special filters. But these filters stop working after a while. Then the pesticide will pass through and you will breathe it in. If you notice a smell or taste, if your eyes or throat burn, or if it gets hard for you to breathe, leave the area **RIGHT AWAY**. Go to a safe area that contains no pesticides. Then take off your respirator

and look at it carefully. Is it torn or worn out? If there are no cracks or other problems you can see, you may need to change the filter.

Because many pesticides do not have a smell or cause irritation, the farmer must replace the filter often.

THE FILTER MUST BE REPLACED

- when directions on the pesticide label say so, *or*
- when the respirator maker says it should be replaced, *or*
- when you first notice smell, taste or irritation, *or*
- at the end of each workday.

Follow the rule that replaces the filter soonest.

REMEMBER: Respirators only protect you from breathing chemicals. Most of the time when pesticides are used, protecting your skin is also important.

WHO TAKES CARE OF THE RESPIRATOR?

When respirators are broken, the farmer must fix them. If they cannot be fixed, the farmer must get new ones.

Respirators should be cleaned and inspected regularly by a person who is trained to do this job. Do not use someone else's respirator without cleaning and disinfecting it first. If the other person has a cold or the flu, you can get sick, too. To prevent these problems, each worker should have his own respirator. Or you can use respirators that can be thrown away after one use.

Respirators should be stored so the face piece does not become bent. They need to be protected from dust, sunlight, and big changes in temperature. Water or certain chemicals can also damage them. Hard plastic containers with lids are good storage containers for respirators. Store respirators and all personal protective equipment away from pesticides.



If you don't get all the information you need in your training, or from your boss, you should call your County Agricultural Commissioner, or the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) for more information. You can find the Commissioner's number in your local white pages phone directory. DPR numbers are:

- Anaheim (714) 279-7690
- Fresno (559) 445-5401
- Sacramento (916) 324-4100

